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The University of Hong Kong

Master of Social Science (Media, Culture and Creative Cities)

SOCI 8030 Capstone Project

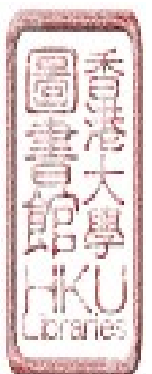
Final Essay

Title

**Beyond TV Genre: An Investigation of the Programme
Production of a Public Service Broadcaster in Hong Kong**

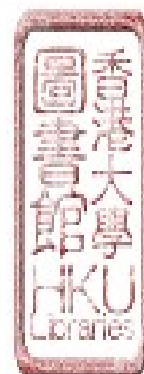
By Lo Winter

Jul 31, 2016



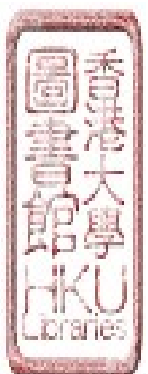
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Abstract

Genre derives from French word meaning 'type' and served as an elementary concept to perceive TV programmes. It can be a sharing of expectation between producers and audience about the classification of a programme. Genre is respect a democratic concept as it embedded viewers' preconception, expectation and demands of television. The genre may be considered as a practical device for helping any mass medium to produce consistently and efficiently and to relate its production to the expectations of its customers. Since it is also a practical device for enabling individual media users to plan their choices, it can be considered as a mechanism. Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) owns the unique status in broadcasting industry. As being a public broadcaster, it is expected to produce alternative programmes under the Charter of RTHK. Music genre could be one of the generic elements in RTHK from its background and should be difference with existing mainstream music related programmes due to non-commercial discretion. This research investigates how music related programmes' producers in RTHK position their products on target audience and the themes and plots they would like to deliver through the programmes. On the other hand, there is always a gap between encoder (sender) and decoder (receiver) in the production circuit. As



programmes from RTHK being valued a high expectation and appreciation than other TV stations, sentiments from internet and social media were gathered to evaluate the effectiveness and acceptance on the themes of the programmes between the mass and the producers of the programmes.

Background

Television is considered as one of the most effective media. Although we are surrounded by the internet and social media, traditional broadcasting media still own a significant impact within our daily life. It is believed that TV stations have their own preference on producing various types of programmes. Corner (1991) and Fiske (1987) suggested that genre is a principle factor in directing audience choice and of audience expectation. Unlike other commercial TV stations, public TV stations are expected to produce different types of programmes which beyond commercial driven. Geller stated that “we no longer should care whether or not the commercial broadcaster plays in the public service field – instead we want the commercial broadcaster to pay for its use of the public spectrum so that public broadcasting can be enabled to make a needed maximum contribution to educating and informing children and the electorate” (Geller, 2003). As being the public broadcaster, RTHK serves a mission to introduce and educate local people to explore alternative types of programme or genres accordingly. Programmes that produce



by RTHK should be compared or follow the general practices around the industry. For instance, similar genres should be found amount RTHK programmes as being a television broadcaster. Keane et. al. (2007) suggested that the term 'genre' is directly associated with narrative structure and types of programming. O'Sullivan et al. added genres as "'recognized paradigmatic sets' that allow the viewer/reader/critic to orient their reactions – in other words, to make sense of the text or to 'limit the meaning potential of a given text'" (1983:99). They agreed that genre represents a process of categorization marked by conventions, features, and norms which associated to cultural practice. As the cultural is fluid in various kinds of aspects, it is observed that television is a container that embedded features in different period of the society on social and cultural change, even though no clear cut definition on each genre in any typical period could be identified. Genres could be varied according to different factors by cultural characteristics, as Allen (1992) added genre is an abstract notion rather than an empirically observable item.

Every aspects of TV exhibit a reliance on genre. Industries rely on genres in producing programmes, as well as other practices such as self-definition and scheduling. Through the common characteristics of different programmes, genres could be defined based on homogeneity. TV stations use genres as a tool for communication between themselves or producing relevant programmes. As Livingstone (2005) recalled that "mass communication is understood as a circuit of articulated practices – production, circulation, reception



reproduction – each of which represents a site of meaning-making”. In relation to the mass media it can be useful to consider the connection of genre not only on the producers of texts but also of those who interpret them. A consensus about the primary purposes of some genres is probably easier to establish than in relation to others. D’Acci (2001) wrote that “genres forge a strong link between the television audience and the television industry, a direct connection between the consumption and the production of programs”. He added that programmes or genres could capture most audience of the right (targeted) ages became the ones that TV station wanted to produce and reproduce; programs and genres that seemed popular because of their ratings were reproduced or cloned, while others fell into oblivion. Number of genres could therefore become an indicator to a television station on reflecting diversified productions. The mass could evaluate television station whether it could cater different kinds of people or not. Feuer (1992) agreed that “genres serve an important, though tacit, cultural function, in that they feed back to viewers important meanings about the culture at large, and thus become ‘an exchange between industry and audience, an exchange through which a culture speaks to itself’” (Feuer 1992:145). Genres could be the first impression to the mass on recognizing a specific type of programmes. They would be compared from different TV stations with their own perceptions. Besides, genre could be developed according to social condition. Thwaites stated that transformations in genre and texts can influence and reinforce social conditions (Thwaites et. al. 1994:100)



Certain genres that could capture audience could become brand identity. Orlebar added that “the recognition of familiar genre convention provides both security and appeal for the audience” (Orlebar, 2011:35). Therefore, genre could differentiate / group particular programmes in order to study the characteristics and social change. Different genres exist under different period on the development stage of the society. Furthermore, it is certain that all genres are combined with different elements and codes for differentiation. The public would give credit to those genres encrypt the popular ones. Chandler (1997) and Fowler (1989) shared an argument that genre can be seen as a shared code between the producers and interpreters of texts included within it. Common elements could only be transferred once the two sides of people reach a communication. Communication is impossible without the agreed codes of genre. Within genres, texts embody authorial attempts to 'position' readers using particular 'modes of address. Genres used to be the communication tools on commenting programmes from experts and the public. Even though we may decode different perspectives with our own experience, similar criteria and characteristics still are portrayed for discussion.

In recent centuries, more and more comments could be retrieved from internet environment. Thanks for the technology development, more and more people willing to share their sentiments towards programmes (no matter supporting or critique). Liu and Xiang (2009) found that “digital technology on the development of film and TV art is



surpassing over any time's impact which brought about by technological advances in history, or even beyond their own expectations or mankind”.

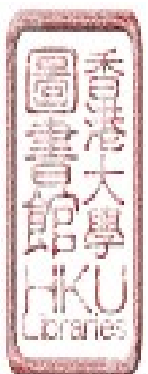
Research questions and methodology

Owing to the unique identity and status, RTHK is selected for study in this project. As being a public service broadcasting institute¹, RTHK serves a different mission from commercial television stations with producing another ‘less common’ or even niche programmes besides those popular genres. According to the performance pledge 2016/17², RTHK comply The Charter of RTHK as basis for regular practice. Strictly speaking, *Charter of Radio Television Hong Kong*³ elaborates the missions of RTHK as well as guideline on producing programmes. Basically, RTHK has to promote education, provide pluralism on diversifying programmes’ production with non-commercial purpose on production. Since one of the two free terrestrial televisions broadcasting companies in Hong Kong, Asia Television Limited (ATV) terminated its broadcasting in Apr 2016, RTHK burden a higher expectation on its productions. Both Hong Kong Government and the public weight RTHK as the second free terrestrial television channel in Hong Kong. Productions from RTHK are more interesting to study at this transition stage. Broadly speaking, music related programme is

¹ Actually RTHK is difference with traditional public service broadcaster (e.g. BBCC) as it is under the hierarchy of Communication Authority of Hong Kong Government, which are public servants but enjoy editorial independence on programme productions

² http://rthk.hk/about/pdf/p_pledge1617_en.pdf (point 8)

³ http://rthk.hk/about/pdf/charter_eng.pdf



one of the major genres around the World. Although there are different methods on producing music related programmes, to encrypt music elements is widely adopted in most TV stations. Music related programmes could arouse people on capturing their attention. Through sharing those programmes with others, people will easily get involved and discuss afterward. As RTHK is divided from radio broadcasting, it is apparently that music element is one of the crucial elements on producing television programmes. Thus, three veteran producers that produced music related programmes are selected for study, they are Mr. Law Chi-Wah from *Pop-up Cantopop II* (我們都是這樣長大的 II), Mr. Brian Fung Ka-kin from *Those were the Songs* (那些年•那些歌) and Mr. Chung Wing-tim from *12 music door. Escape* (12 音樂門•逃). All the interviews are conducted in March, 2016.

Three objectives are schedule to be depicted within this project, i.e.

1. Comprehend the interpretation from the production side on common genre in broadcasting industry within a public servicing institute
2. Recognize the variance on particular programmes between the production side (encoder) as well as the reception side (decoder) from the public
3. Summarize the two sides on the expectation/reception and highlight the similar / difference accordingly

Respondents of the three in-depth interviews are the executive producers which produced music related programmes in 2015. The three interviewees claimed music



element is not the merely component equipped in their programmes. Various concepts are depicted within their programmes that makes the genre could be mixed or merged with new elements. As genre definition is mobilized by cultural development, it could not be fixed and constant. Genre studies should be considered as an ongoing process with updating and modifying. Mittell (2001) added that “genre definitions are always partial and contingent, emerging out of specific cultural relations, rather than abstract textual ideals”. In order to retrieve a thorough understanding, Benoit & Smythe (2003) argued that audience may choose to agree or disagree with a message. They may decide to act or refrain from acting on behalf of a message, and they may choose to act against the blandishments of a message. In order to fetch their attributes from public sphere, internet and social media could be an effective medium as it could trace back people’s behavior with solid reference. Survey on these new media seems the only way to obtain u-to-date information directly. Therefore, audience reception from internet and social media are included in this project for boarder coverage. For instance, comments from three major internet forums in Hong Kong (i.e. discuss.com.hk, hkgolden.com and babykingdom.com) are fetched from 2015 (before the three programmes launched) to Jun 2016. Since all the three programmes could be seen in YouTube as official released from RTHK, comments from YouTube under the three programmes are also gathered for analysis. Threads and snippets will be collected prior those snippets include word(s), the ones merely replied with emoji will be excluded as no



exact meaning could be depicted. Threads from all three programmes will be divided into corresponding topics. In addition, two quantitative surveys on television programmes which contain demographic viewership are applied in order to have a general perception on audience profile on the programmes respectively; they are the Hong Kong Television Audience Measurement (HKTAM) from Nielsen⁴ and Television Appreciation Index from Hong Kong University Public Opinion Programme (HKUPOP)⁵. HKTAM survey measures TV audience viewing information in a daily basis. Through weighted distribution on Hong Kong population, viewership of TV programmes could represent the general tendency in Hong Kong. HKUPOP is another quantitative survey which conducting appreciation index to Hong Kong television audience. Applying likeliness from respondents, an appreciation index (TVAI) of selected programmes broadcasted in Hong Kong is developed on quarterly basis. Information of the three programmes based on these two surveys will be collected for further discussion.

The format of *Pop-up Cantopop II* is about the host, Mr. Albert Au, a famous veteran singer in Hong Kong, interview with other great singers. Each episode interviewed one artist and chat with the guest on music related issues to explore their past experience. During each session, the guest is invited to carry out live performance on their songs. The programme not only inviting front stage singers, but also supporting cast like chor

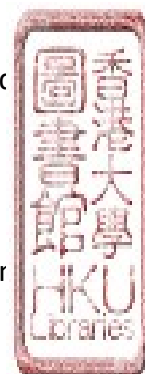
⁴ Author is granted for using relevant figures in the report by HKTAM Founding Subscriber Committee (FSC)

⁵ <https://www.hkupop.hku.hk/english/tvai/2015/index.html>



members are also on the list. *Those were the Songs* is more emotional as the producer Fung believed songs could be a container of collective memories. Through overlapping songs from one singer in each episode, situational conversation and relationship among the artists are portraying past experience on local residents. Touching and sentimental feelings are expected to spread out among audience, especially the middle aged people as those singers are mainly from 80's and 90's. Each episode comprised by separate story with no relationship and treated as a one-off drama, the main plot is songs are selected from one singer for one episode. *12 music door* is a bit different from the other two programmes. There is a certain objective before producing the programme, to co-ordinate concerts with the twelve music units. The main objective of the programme is to introduce those artists and their rationales on insisting to be a singer. Actually, the programme could be sentimental as those music units are not in the top tier even though they have been working within the industry for years and most of them could be recognized by the public. The programme let the performers have rooms to illustrate more about their daily lives and obstacles they encounter in this industry. After broadcasting twelve episodes (twelve units of artists), concerts will be hosted for them respectively. According to Cheung, the programme is co-produced with Composer and Authors Society Hong Kong Limited (CASH) which could provide assistance on arranging artists and venue of live performance.

On the contrary, unlike other media, information from internet and social media sustain

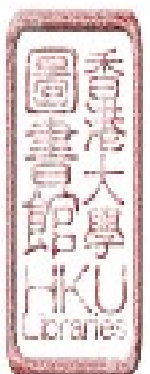


in fluid status, comments from internet forums and social media platforms changes constantly. Thus, it is impossible to include all internet and social media for the study as it refers huge volume of flowing data. The only way for the research is fetching all relevant information before compiling the final output, even though threads are still transforming day by day.

Research findings

Based on the in-depth interviews

All three producers work in RTHK for more than 20 years. They claimed all producers are following the same hierarchy, which start from production assistant (PA) as a beginner in the division. Basically, they supported that RTHK enjoy greater autonomy on production within the media industry. Although they all admitted that the spirit of Charter of RTHK is embedded in all their productions, no plain documents are needed for them. They all claimed that those core values of the Charter are internalized through their experience in the PA stage. They agreed that those promoted as a producer should obtain and acknowledge accordingly. Producers are encouraged to produce different types of programmes or even based on niche market (such as arts programmes) as they all consented that commercial TV stations may not willing to support on such issue under business discretion. In addition, to cater the niche market in producing diversify programme is one o



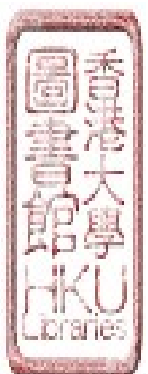
the principles of the Charter.

When differentiating genres in RTHK programmes, they stated that only three streams are divided in RTHK, i.e. Public and Current Affair (PCA), Education Television Programmes (ETV) and the others which excluded from the two streams, programmes such as dramas, arts and culture, documentaries are under this stream. They stated that PCA is the core value for RTHK as most resources are under such stream to maintain the up-to-date and in-depth analysis. Orlebar (2011) supported that news is the backbone of Public broadcaster as expectation from the public is higher than other commercial TV stations obviously. The three programmes that going to be studied are refer to the others category (that beyond to PCA and ETV). In addition, all three music related programmes are group under the category of “Arts and Culture” in RTHK website.

The interviewees generally believe that people rated RTHK programmes are better than all other commercial TV’s production. The main reason they thought is productions from RTHK are more detailed. For their own programmes, all of them stressed that they could encrypt their own concepts in the programmes and could deliver to the public thoroughly. It would be evaluated through qualitative and quantitative information in the next session.

Based on internet forums and social media snippets

Among the three internet forums in this study, discuss.com.hk could be treated as mos



sizeable and systematic. Only discuss.com.hk has divided a separate session on discussing RTHK programmes. Generally speaking, numbers of comments from YouTube are more than the internet forums. Most of the snippets are related to the programmes and comments are rather on positive side. For example, on *Pop-up Cantopop II*, the mass showed admiration on the host on the opening with remaking one of the famous songs from the guest in new lyrics to pay tribute to him or her. On *Those were the Songs*, since the programme is related to the golden songs with associate single artist in each episode, net users tend to appreciate the format with initiate their 'wish list' of artists that they would like to be the next subject(s) in the future. On *12 music door*, snippets reflect supporting on the artists with encouragement from the programme in common. On the contrary, on *Pop-up Cantopop II*, critiques on the host, Mr. Albert Au are observed as he captures too much time on expressing his viewpoints with limited space for the guests respectively. Also, on *Those were the Songs*, some people from baby-kingdom.com expressed that the theme may be too difficult for them to understand.

Based on quantitative survey from HKTAM and HKUPOP

According to RTHK website, *12 music door* is the first programme to be broadcasted in RTHK channels solely with no other commercial TV channels scheduled. The roadmap from HKTAM on monitoring RTHK channels' viewing behaviours starts from Apr, 2016. Hence no



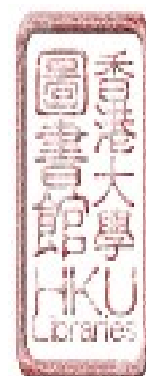
figures from HKTAM could be achieved accordingly.

On *Pop-up Cantopop II* and *Those were the Songs*, the general viewing profile by demographic groups could be seen in Table 1. Viewers on prime time (from 7:00 pm to 11:00 pm) are more than other sessions as more people are available at home for watching TV. Since *Pop-up Cantopop II* was scheduled in fringe time (12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. on Sunday) and *Those were the Songs* was scheduled in prime time (7:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday), apparent difference on viewing audience between them is expected. From the data shown, although aged 25-34 shows supporting on the *Pop-up Cantopop II*, there is a general distribution on the viewing profile that aged 50+ contribute much on viewership among all demo groups within the two programmes, especially on *Those were the Songs*. It also seems interesting that Aged 4-14 showed supporting on *Those were the Songs*.

Table 1. Viewership on *Pop-up Cantopop II* and *Those were the Songs*

Programme Name	TV ratings					
	Aged	Aged	Aged	Aged	Aged	Aged
	4+	4-14	15-24	25-34	35-49	50+
Pop-up Cantopop II	2.6	1.9	0.7	2.8	1.6	3.8
Those were the Songs	10.2	11.1	4.4	6.4	7.7	14.7

Source: Nielsen HKTAM

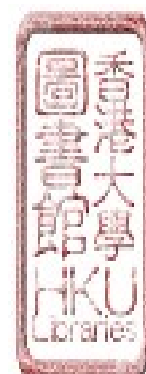


HKUPOP shared another scenario based on the appreciation index figure. The logistic of appreciation index figure is different from viewing figures fundamentally. It projected respondents' likeliness to the programme with asking them to score the programme for calculating the figure of appreciation index. Basically, the higher score the programme achieve, the more appreciation the public behave (shown in Table 2). On *Pop-up Cantopop II*, age shows positive relationship with aged people generally like the programme. On *Those were the Songs*, a contrary situation recorded. The youth exhibit more interest towards the programme than the results from HKTAM. On *12 music door*, a similar tendency is observed as younger generation showed more support on the programme.

Table 2. Age distribution of the three music-related programmes in RTHK

	Appreciation Index					
Programme Name	Aged 9-19	Aged 20-29	Aged 30-39	Aged 40-49	Aged 50-59	Aged 60+
Pop-up Cantopop II	68.60	69.94	64.66	70.84	71.56	67.12
Those were the Songs	70.97	67.36	69.60	65.83	65.81	65.65
12 music door. Escape	63.13	77.83	67.10	57.28	53.80	64.84

Source: HKUPOP 2015 TV Appreciation Index Survey



Discussions

During the three in-depth interviews, all three producers expressed that they are fond of creative industry in their school age and feel honored to work as part of it. Besides, they all agreed that RTHK is a pleasant working environment since they could enjoy more creativity on producing programmes. Beyond autonomy on producing their own programmes, Mr. Law added that being a producer in RTHK could have opportunities to produce various types of programmes which decided by their own. With attempting different genre of productions, Law and Fung said that it would bring up the inspiration on comprising another genre of programme(s). For example, Fung suggests that he could use the experience from producing documentary to construct the theme on making relevant drama in the future). He also added that one of the attractions as being a producer in RTHK is creative ideas and themes could be motivated by interchanging genre production. Law shares another experience that producers in RTHK could have the autonomy to choose different genres on production in different stages. He told that he used to feel interest on producing dramas, but he tends to create documentary in recent years. He stress that it may not be feasible in other commercial TV stations. Programmes by himself may be changed based on his own interest directly. Although it is indeed an attractive condition for creative industry, especially for producers, it is questioned that the diversity of programmes could be function properly. If the decision-making process on choosing programmes to be produced

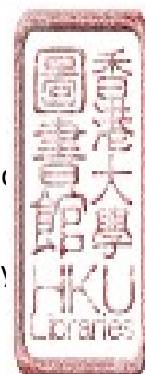


merely based on producers' own interest may lead to prejudice on skewing typical topic(s) and structure, which RTHK programmes usually assumed to be connected to reality documentaries. Although Law mentioned that there is a regular meeting within the executive producers and managements, it is puzzled that as three interviewees shared that autonomy on creative process earns high respect in RTHK, seldom restrictions will be assumed to apply upon their "creative elements". Even though we could not accuse that no creativity within RTHK programmes, it is queried under the boundary of the Charter of RTHK, expanding different types of programmes is one of the major criteria on production, producers may tend to express their own strength or interest instead of carrying different tones of productions. It is believed that genre classification could be diversifying programmes into different genres accordingly. If we studying programme types from RTHK, common areas and similarities on their products are easily observed. According to RTHK official website, various genres could be found from their programmes, such as Arts and Culture, Current Affairs, Teenagers, Music, Education, Family, Children, History, Community. Nevertheless, it is vague on such programme classification as these categories are usually overlapping. Besides the traditional programmes, such as 'News and Finance' programmes, other programmes are no longer satisfied to be associated with one genre. With the mixture of more and more elements in the content, the output serves a more complicated product. Yet, the classification on the RTHK website contains some similar elements / types of



products, such as culture, history and community. It is considered that these may refer to other programmes, especially on RTHK programmes. For example, *Cultural Heritage* (文化長河) and *Roots Old And New, Stories Of Chinese Emigrants* (華人移民史), they all displayed under the category of “Culture” and “History”). Furthermore, the three studied programmes; *Pop-up Cantopop II* is related to “Popular Music” and “Life and Leisure”; *Those were the Songs* refers to “Music” only from the official website. However, according to the interview, Fung recalled that he tries to use popular songs from 80’s to 90’s with one artist in each episode to recap the scenario from those years. He believes that those songs could recall the old things that we may lost in these years. Songs are the tool to deliver his messages mainly. It is said that only categorized the programme into Music (even Popular Music) could not satisfy the characteristics of it. On the other hand, programme “C” also encounter similar situation. According to Cheung, the main concept of the programme is to give praise to those hardworking artists but still do not receive great appreciation from the public. Cheung expressed that through a story-telling format, the programme would like to give a chance to those artists to express their own stories and why they deserve to sustain in the industry. Although music element is covered in many areas, Cheung claimed that the programme is rather like a combination of music and documentary but not only related to music.

Three executive producers stated that they are not producing traditional music programmes like commercial TV stations. They mock the general music programmes only



countdown weekly top ten songs but no other content. For example, Fung supported productions from RTHK are more in-depth in portraying detailed information. He added that the team on producing the programme has an overall agenda before shooting as connecting songs and daily life, which he proudly said that such format is seldom used before. He tried to recall daily lives from previous days to arouse resonance from audience. According to the internet media, it actually received many positive comments from the mass. Among the comments and snippets from internet environment, people quote those songs and scenes for discussion. Besides, those famous songs are also the topic(s) for discussion. For example, during the episodes of Eason Chan and Faye Wong, people captured the lyrics from their songs for sharing. Moreover, Fung also wished that the programme could commence imagination since the programme is related to collective memories by different songs. From the response of the net users, they could actually address this issue with initiate their own check lists on artists. It reflects that people are favour to the artists. Through watching the programme and sharing with others, they propose their own lists of artists to be included in the future (meanwhile, no planning for the second series ahead). Various artists are nominated from the sentiments in the internet environment and stimulate further discussion. This should be the positive responses from the mass towards the programme as they have expecting on the extension of the programme. Another supporting could be observed from the sentiments on *Pop-up Cantopop II*. People share affirmative statement or

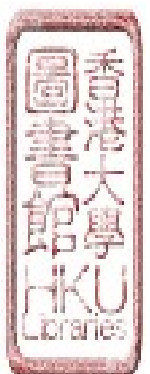


the opening of each episode. As the host of the programme, Mr. Albert Au is a veteran singer in Hong Kong. During the beginning of each episode, he remakes new lyrics into one of the famous songs from each guest on describing the guest relevantly. The audiences generally treasure his effort on applauding the guest's achievement. The producer, Law said that one of the main themes is having an entire review and respect on the past several decades of music industry in Hong Kong by the host. Law added that the plot of the programme is not just a music programme, it tend to combine music and talk show element. He admitted that the format maybe a bit subjective as only sharing their experience, he argued that he would like to express the theme of the song(s) at such moment through the live conversation between the guest and the host. To arouse discussion of collective memory would be identical. The comments from internet reflect a somewhat supporting as some snippets recalled the segments from the interview with adding their own statements. People share their views as having a thorough understanding of the artist from watching an authentic conversation. Sentiments from the programme also echo the presupposition of the producer. As some snippets agreed that fewer artists could perform like the guests nowadays. Law described the guests are from the golden stage of music industry in Hong Kong, they are easy recognized as well as their songs. On the other hand, he thinks that the youth may not easily recognize to those songs as they are not born in such period. Thus, in his point of view, the target audience of his programme should be aged 40 plus with family.



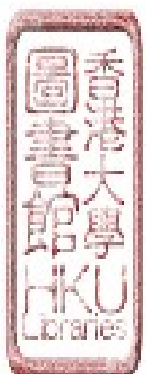
On *12 music door*, since it is connected to the artists directly, people who leave sentiments through internet media are expected to be supporters. Moreover, as the producer Cheung admitted that the programme is rather emotional on elaborating their stories. It is anticipated that more positive snippets should be around the programme. Through the interview, Cheung explained that the original idea of the programme is coordinate a concert for those hardworking artists without high appreciation. He said that it is hard to draw attention with only host a concert instantly. The programme was an introduction to the public of the 12 units of artists to let people recognize them well before the concert. It has a lead-in effect as those 12 units share their own songs during the programme. With a direct link of the programme⁶ (which is not a common practice in RTHK programmes), it is more convenient to follow the information through internet and social media. Generally speaking, the public agreed that those stories from the 12 music units are touching. They share comments and snippets in the internet, show supporting to the artists. Some comments even stated they will buy ticket for their concert afterwards. It is obvious that the programme could be a stepping stone for the concert later. It is observed that the supporting from net users is not strange as people usually share similar attitudes in the internet. Those discourage sentiments will considered as deviance and are not welcome within the thread (unless a thread on criticizing the pogramme would gather relevant

⁶ Direct link of the programme: <http://app4.rthk.hk/special/12musicvisions/index.htm>



snippets correspondingly).

Nevertheless, counter arguments still registered around all circumstances, not only the positive comments will appear, but also negative impression will be recorded. Critiques from the public towards the programmes are collected from the same sources. According to Hall (1993), audience may not only receive a preferred readings, negotiated readings or even opposition readings will emerged through their process on understanding of the text. Although sender would encrypt the meaning through texts, screens (denoted messages) as well as concepts and ideas (connoted meanings), respondents may or may not totally adopted them. They may accept, reject or partially accept the messages delivered. Respondents would value the messages with their empirical experience and knowledge. According to the three producers, they have their own assumption and plots on producing their programmes. Even though they agreed their programmes are definite related to music, all of them argued that their products should not associate to music category only. They thought it is not enough to describe nowadays programmes with applying the tradition norms of classification. For example, Law, the executive producer of *Pop-up Cantopop II*, thought his programme should be a combination of music and live talk show. With many segments that are conversation between the host and the guest(s), it carries a hidden agenda within the programme - audience could have more rooms to review the music industry nowadays by querying the environment of existing music industry. We used to



commend the golden songs during 80's or 90's but not recent decades. Those performances are weighted at high status as the public generally show appreciation to them. Law would like to evoke the mass to evaluate the Hong Kong music industry comparatively. Some responses do address the issue through internet media as they agreed recent artists could not reach the same status and achievement. Sentiments focus on expressing their own wish list of favourite artists in future episodes. Even though this could also be a supportive response to the producer's statement, the mass tend to recognize the programme by negotiated readings. Evaluation on the programme may not be the focus to them, instead of nominate other artists could be more task oriented. It is understandable for the public show more interest on their wish list through connotation process, but not with the steps from the producer (sender). Thus, the theme from Law could only transmit to the audience partially. On the other hand, during the interview session, Law once claimed that the target audience of the programme would be people around aged 30 to 40 with families. He admitted the programme may male oriented and would capture middle aged people as he insisted audience that have experienced such issues only could echo the guests' viewpoints. According to the figures from HKTAM, major contributors of the programme are aged 25 to 34 and aged 50+ people. This may not directly address the assumption from Law as aged 35 to 49 shows less supports to the programme. It is interesting that from Law's projection they are one of the targeted groups as they may share similar thoughts with the guests. Or



the contrary, some sentiments share critical comments on the programme. As the programme format is mainly decided and controlled by the host, it is expected that the dialogues between the host and the guests could be reserved most portion of the programme. Audience will therefore value the quality of the programme by their conversation as if it could satisfy their needs (expectation). Some critiques on the host, Albert Au hosting too many dialogue as the guest(s) have limited space to share his/her comments correspondingly. The mass identify the programme like an interview with artists. They argued the host could spare more time to the guest(s) on sharing their experience and viewpoints. In fact, the host is a well-known veteran singer in Hong Kong, the format of the programme as well as the guests are widely appreciated by the public, denoted messages from the host may not be well endorsed by receivers, opposition readings appeared in this case with strong and confirmative messages on criticizing the host directly. Audience could both share the two extreme of snippets as those messages could be emotional and affected by others. People may follow the previous sentiments as they could stimulate other internet surfers with similar feelings. Therefore, similar type of messages could be observed under the thread.

On *Those were the Songs*, a similar scenario is observed. The programme original would like to describe the songs in 80's and 90's which consolidate with different emotions. According to the producer (Fung), the programme would like to use those songs to construct



different circumstances that we may encounter before. Fung added that they use one single artist for each episode as the only plot in order to represent the corresponding artist in such period. Besides this main plot, Fung shared that there is no other presumed flow to connect each episode. Thus, he admitted that there is no connection for each episode and styles and formats may not be consistent as directors from each episode may be directed by different style and angle. All they have to do before producing each episode is putting an agenda of the theme and equipped with songs from one artist. Fung described that the programme is like a mini-drama with songs. The formatting and flow is goes behind with songs. He claimed that it may compare with music video (MV) but he insisted it is different as the weighting of the songs is less important than those commercial music videos. On the targeting audience of the programme, Fung shared a similar message with Law. He thought people with aged 30 plus may feel more interesting to the programme. He explained that the songs chosen are from veteran singers mainly. He expected the audience should embed relevant knowledge as well as life experience before enjoying the scenario and songs. Keane et. al. reminded that “since the images and sounds of television are polysomic, it can never be guaranteed that audiences will make sense of the programme in a way that is consistent with the ‘dominant’ or ‘preferred’ reading, limit the range of ways in which audiences can interpret the programme” (Keane et. al. 2007:263) which the findings could encrypted much disturbances.

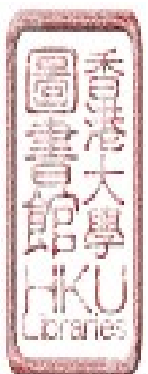


On the quantitative side, not all receptions are recorded in-line with the data. With reference of HKTAM, it shows that aged people (for example, aged 35 to 49 and aged 50 plus) earns a higher proportion on viewing profile. It is obvious that they expressed much interest to the programme. It could be considered supporting with Fung's plot. Nevertheless, the data from HKTAM also reflect another demographic group on large portion among the profile, i.e. aged 4 to 14 people. They are the second major contributor to the programme. It is weird when applying Fung's logic on the viewing profile. This group of people should not been experienced relevant situation and acquire such knowledge and they are not the expected group on the viewing profile. However, with the supporting figures from HKTAM, the producers may need to re-consider the impact on non-targeted groups as they may also generate contribution towards the overall profile. Furthermore, another quantitative survey from HKUPOP explicit more clear on this framework. Among the six demographic groups, the youngest group (aged 9 to 19) recorded highest score while the eldest group received the lowest score comparatively. It really sends back a contradiction outcome with Fung's assumption apparently. The expected group of people fails to contribute viewership but shift to another group to accomplish. With the appreciation index on the programme recorded higher in the youth than other elder ones, it directly ponders the implication on the young people. On the other hand, another counter observation towards the programme was found from the internet forum. Some snippets from babykingdom.com shared a comment that



they feel puzzled on the meaning of the programme. The sentiments commented that although they appreciated the golden songs within the programme, they also argued the theme is quite difficult to understand which let them feel disappointed. The sophisticated plot receives a draw back from audience accordingly. As Fung claimed no concrete theme is planned ahead the production, each episode could be fragmented and people may not perceive the tone easily.

When questioning on each episode, Fung replied that various things they would like to embed in the programme to share with the mass. He believes songs could be a container of collective memories that could be touching. On the other hand, Fung said that the theme of each episode may not be exposed explicitly, which may be released through detailed description within the segments (as he is proud of focusing on detail adjustment when producing the programme). He wished audience could share his concepts and feedback upon his arrangement. Indeed, some audience could reach Fung and other producers expectation based on the denoted and connoted messages on leaving relevant comments and snippets in the internet environment. As said, there is a similar situation of the viewers between *Pop-up Cantopop II* and *Those were the Songs*. It is hardly to argue that audience are generally accepted or rejected the messages from the programmes, as many of them shared supportive comments and snippets to encourage the guests and the programmes. They like the formats and guests of the two programmes. Since the two programmes are



portraying the good old times from last centuries, it will easily attract people to answering their emotional needs, especially on *Those were the Songs*. The difference between two programmes on relating the attribute of singers could be the approach of production. On *Pop-up Cantopop II*, the presentation is rather subjective and directly. Through interviewing with the singers and performers, the producer / host would like to let the public have another perspective on recognizing them. Those messages are rather explicit and executed directly. No matter audience consent or not, the denoted messages are easily to understand. *Those were the Songs* is relatively sophisticated and messages are connoted into emotional which delivered indirectly. As Fung stated the programme used to bring out experience and perception from the past (although he did not mentioned which period the programme is intend to associate, 80s could be generally apply as the main theme since songs are most from 70s and 80s). With each episode single out as a separate story that united by one singer's songs, people from 70s and 80s and fans of the singer(s) are clear the target audience for the programme. Audience will then apply their uses of gratification on decoding the messages. In fact, Fung said that he received a long letter from one of the audience mentioned that he is really touching from the programme and the audience like the programme as such programme could not been seen from other TV station.

Another situation is found in *12 music door*. As stated, the programme would like to recall some hardworking singers but still not receiving great achievement and grant another



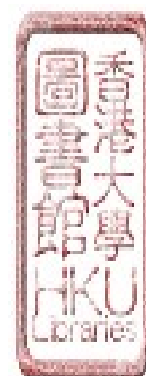
chance to them. Cheung would like to deliver the dominant code as he argues those music units deserve a chance from the public. He projected the programme would capture the youth rather than middle-aged people as those music units are still in struggling stage, he connoted a similar situation with the youth and let them involve in the twelve music units and be more considerable to them. Notwithstanding, Cheung shared the ideology of making the programme by added one concern that the youth should still have interest and be enthusiastic to music as he thinks music is no longer popular. He worries on the music element could arouse less people to feel passionate. The word popular music may not link-up in this environment anymore. Thus, he claimed that *12 music door* is not merely a music programme, even though the portion of music is rather heavy. Cheung reported that he classifies the programme as music-documentary as the programme encrypts various kinds of information from the artists to spread out to the mass. He said they spent much time for researching each music unit, such as their background, family or even friends to depict those units are real stories and the final product is like a documentary. Thus, he besides suggested if music element is taken out from the programme, it could be considered a pure documentary programme. Although he stated that not all the ideas could be included in the programme, he added that it is acceptable that documentary usually may not embed all elements as it covers too many fragmented items. He evaluated the overall framework that related to the lives of the artists could be well delivered. Audience are expected to



value the quality of the programme is not just for entertaining but could be a tools for reflection. He proud of the sequence as scheduled Kelvin Kwan for the first episode since the story is well-known among us and it could have a clear denoted and connoted statement. People may familiar with his guests due to his background as Cheung assumes it will capture more attention. According to the responses from the mass on internet and social media, they show appreciation to the effort of those music units. They generally could recall and highlight the sentiments from the programme and share their supporting in the virtual internet environment. For example, in YouTube, each episode from the programme as well as the concerts is uploaded. It is easy to identify which episode could attract more audience with comparing with their views (see as Table 3).

Table 3. Overall views on each episode of *12 music door* (12 music door. Escape)

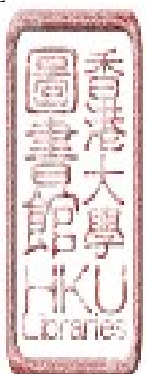
Views (as of Jul 28, 2016)	Music Unit	Broadcasting date
2,997	Kwan Chor-yiu, Kelvin	Oct 19, 2015
5,248	J. Arie (Rachel Lui)	Oct 26, 2015
9,754	Wu Hung Kwan, Hubert	Nov 2, 2015
11,037	Wong Shan Yee, Kandy	Nov 9, 2015
4,738	Det Dik	Nov 16,2015
N.A.	Bianca Wu	Nov 23, 2015



29,730	Supper Moment	Nov 30, 2015
3,100	Jay Fung	Dec 7, 2015
33,129	Joyce Cheng	Dec 14, 2015
7,090	MasterMic	Dec 21, 2015
19,274	Phil Lam	Dec 28, 2015
10,977	Dear Jane	Jan 4, 2016
2,745	Dreams of 12 music unit	Jan 11, 2016

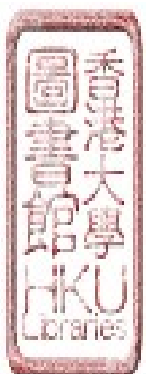
Source: youtube.com views count (as of Jul 28, 2016)

It is seen that the most viewed music unit are Joyce Cheng and Supper Moment. On the other hand, the debut episode only achieves around three thousand views, which may not arouse a huge impact to the mass as Cheung suggested. On the other hand, the wrap up episode also fails to reorganize people as it targeted to recap call the music units as a union and become a lead-in for the upcoming concerts to the public. It is obvious that sentiments from the more popular episodes are more than those with less views' episodes. Those sentiments are majorly on the sharing from the artists. Statements from the artists are usually extracted with comments by the mass. It is interesting that people seldom leave snippets on their songs; seem they agreed that the programme is mainly illustrating the daily lives of the 12 music units instead of performing songs. Although the message is connoted from Cheung's perspective as no apparent statement or dialogue is included in the



programme, audience could recognize and agreed with corresponding snippets. For instance, with the least sentiments in the last episode, it is hardly to conclude the audience decodes the message with rejecting the denoted idea or not. According to the findings of HKUPOP, the youth generally tend to value the programme with more appreciation than the matured. With comparing with Cheung ideology that the target audiences of the programme are the youth with interesting on music, the findings may be in-line with his expectation. Even though the elderly group also show a pretty well appreciation towards the programme (with score 64.8, the second highest groups in general), the general results of the appreciation score skewed to the youth comparatively. (see Table 1).

It is obvious that communication process is a two way process and interaction is an essential element. In order to have a thorough understanding on the practice of production process, it is not satisfy on focusing the sender (encoder) argument and theme, to expand the study on receiver (decoder) side would be a complete understanding on the process whether there is potential to enhance the relationship soon. The audience processes messages by producing thoughts about the content or topic (or source) of the message (this elaboration of the message via cognitive responses takes place on a continuum from peripheral to central processing). During interviews with the three producers, they expressed that audience composition is different nowadays. Law said that television used to be a family entertaining tool as people usually watch TV with family members. Programme



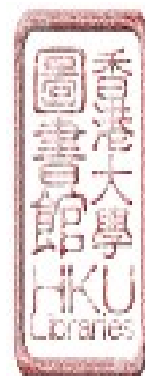
could be produced base on a standard formula. He argued that audience nowadays shifts to individual based as they have more choice on TV programmes and more options besides television on their leisure time. The public are more willing to express their opinion, which they may share more comments to various programmes in any platforms to others. Law considered this as an advantage for producers since they could have more ways to know the needs from the public. Fung basically shared the similar concept to Law, but with a supplementary on people expressing more opinions. He added that nowadays audiences like to critique everything than give credits. Audience would have more autonomy to choose programmes to watch based on their own convenience. Comparing with Law and Fung, Cheung has another observation on the audience trend. He claimed that nowadays audience could be divided into two types. Most of them are hard core viewers as they may not easy to switch to another channel(s) and stick to they own. While others may not stick to one channel only and even shift to another device (not using television to watch TV programmes). It is hard to secure people in one single channel in the future as multi-devices would be a trend on watching TV soon. He suggested that the critical issue in the future would be copyright issue as programmes may be broadcasted not merely on one channel. Even though all producers admitted that audience are changed to be individual viewing and more comments and sentiments from audience towards TV programmes could be collected through different channels (such as e-mail, social media), they all think that they are satisfy



for the interaction between producer and audience under this criteria. Law replied that the annual meeting of consultation committee meeting⁷ could gather comments and advices from other industry's representatives. Fung and Cheung both commented that they should not weight too much on the snippets from the public as RTHK is different from a commercial TV station which should maintain both consistency and autonomy on producing programmes. They both hesitated that over stress on the mass sentiments will interfere the quality of the products. However, as more and more foreign TV stations tend to involve audience participation on producing programmes to let the programme become more interactive and related to the mass, RTHK may suffered much pressure with keeping up the autonomy on programme productions completely.

The three interviewees also asked to comment existing TV programmes. It is interesting that they overall thought the diversity of programme genres is not enough as usually only a few types of programmes with common characteristics are being produced. Law critiqued that it is hard to find a topic from TV pogramme to discuss within the society. Although new technologies emerged in the market (such as aerial shooting), they will be digested in a short period and treated as ordinary skills. Fung also commented that no new genre is found in recent production. Only repeating existing format is the major trend on production.

⁷ Consultation committee meeting of RTHK in 2015 <http://rthk.hk/special/advisorypanel2015/home.htm>



Conclusion

In the communication process it is inevitable to encounter a gap between the sender on delivering connoted and denoted messages and the receiver from interpreting the messages with their uses of gratification as method. Hauser (1986) expressed that “if we know what a message is likely to mean to receivers, we can understand better why they respond as they do”. Hall (1993) summarized that not all messages could be delivered to the audience completely since audience will have their own framework of knowledge on recognizing the programme. Casey et. al. agreed that the encoding process of the message denote or/and connote certain semiotic meanings by encoder (producer) but may not guaranteed transmitted to the decoder (audience) (Casey et. al., 200:82). Moreover, John Fiske added that “the resistance reading is one that goes against the grain of (rather than rejecting) the preferred meaning” (Fiske, 1989). It makes the interpretation become more complicated as not just three situations could be projected accordingly. For instance, Morley (2006) argued that the ‘indifferent audience’ may be one of the key issues for contemporary audience research as they usually refer to the largest portion of the group. Roser and Thompson (1995) found that “it is possible for measuring audience’s level of involvement and their processing of messages, to be influenced by persuasive messages”. It is hard to interpret whether he or she refers to any types of understanding and this group of audience is supposed own the majority portion. Nevertheless, according to the sentiments from internet and social media



not just preferred reading is recorded, negotiation, opposition or even outright rejection are also observed from internet environment. The supplementary of the concept from Fiske or the 'indifferent audience' may need further qualitative studies, such as focus group, to fetch their comments towards the programmes correspondingly. Benoit & Smythe (2003) put an objective statement that "auditors are not always active participants (they can be "couch potatoes"), but they have the potential to be active". No matter the internet media or the two quantitative surveys, it is believed that they just elaborate a part of the iceberg only. With emerged with new media, Livingstone alerted that "audience research is challenged in relation to reception, thereby encouraging the privatization of media use, including the media-rich bedroom culture of young people. Audience were not the same before and will not be the same again" (Livingstone, 2005)

Television studies could be divided in various methods in different period. Casey (1992) suggested that genre includes the codes and conventions within between television programmes (Casey et. al., 2002:81). Using genre as a tool to study is rather a simple way as it is an essential element for each channels and TV stations. Genre identification could be an entrance for general public. Each channel and TV station need to classify their programmes into different of genre for scheduling. In Hong Kong, TV stations must follow the "Generic Code of Practice on Television Programme Standard"⁸ which broadcasting schedule should

⁸ http://www.coms-auth.hk/filemanager/common/policies_regulations/cop/code_tvprog_e.pdf

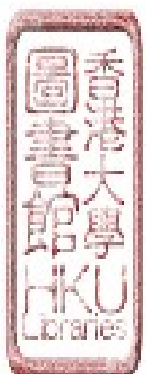


include several instructed genres in daily and weekly basis. Genre study could be a fundamental and essential tool for understanding the practice of TV station. Notwithstanding, with the supporting from all three interviewees, programme production may not only classified by single genre as more than one genre will be merged nowadays, especially on documentaries. Chandler (1997) and O'Sullivan et al. (1994) also advised that “texts often exhibit the conventions of more than one genre. The same text can belong to different genres in different countries or times”. Fung and Cheung advised that their programmes could be a mixture of music and documentary. They both agreed that the section of documentary is the main body as they reported music is comparatively an added value for the programme. Casey et. al. stated that “the instructive function of the documentary has made it essential to broadcasting systems based on a public service model in countries where there is no public service tradition, or where commercial television is the dominant system, the supply of documentaries is often limited” (Casey, et. al. 2002:69). RTHK serves an advantage on producing documentaries accordingly and this may address the quantities of documentaries from RTHK and the overall positive impressions from the public as well. On applying internet media and social media as gathering sentiments from reception side could be limited to the scope of the research. Besides, as we know social media may contain much motional snippets which may not the actual comments from the user. For the future study in this area, internet and social media maybe considered as

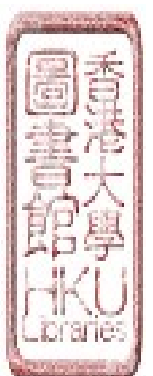


reference and followed by focus group for in-depth communication with certain respondents.

There is another interesting issue among the producers during interview sessions. On the one hand, they stated they need not follow the popular trend on making programmes as they are not commercial TV stations, to maintain standard from existing flows is the top priority (it is guessed the principle is boundaries of the Charter which internalized among themselves); on the other hand, they argued that audience aptitude is fragmentized on viewing behavior. Thus, it is questioned that they are not planning to fetch the consensus from the public. As a producer, it is weird not to concern the reception sides and needs on producing programmes, especially on upgrading the quality of the programmes. Audience feedback may turn to be populism, but they may be constructive. For example, sentiments from the internet media reflect the wish list on *Those were the Songs* may be worth to take consideration on the next series. From the data shown by HKTAM, *Those were the Songs* draws more young generations, it may be another perspective on producing next series as well. Palmgreen (1984) once suggested that possible sources for inspiration include the use of gratifications approach to understanding mass media and the audience. Notwithstanding, when queried on such issue, Law answered that there is no discrepancy as the reason people like to watch RTHK programmes is due to the characteristics of RTHK, all RTHK needed is keep track on consistency and people will follow simultaneously. Maybe that is the



main reason why similarities of RTHK programmes are found years to years.



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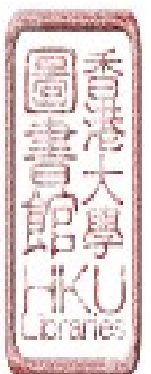
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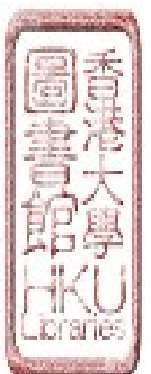
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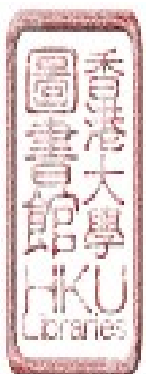
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